

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Birthplace of Redwood Conservation Movement

State's Oldest Park Marks 100th Birthday

SANTA CRUZ – The ancient redwood forests across southern Oregon and northern California were disappearing at an alarming rate. By the late 1870s, the southern portion of the range was vanishing from California's landscape. At the beginning of the 20th Century, the Santa Cruz Mountain redwood forests were on the brink of destruction.

But on the location of the present day Big Basin Redwoods State Park, something happened that forever changed the environment of California. A small group of committed individuals decided it would not let these ancient trees be destroyed. Their work sparked the redwood conservation movement, which became the powerful environmental movement that continues to this day. One hundred years later, it is time to celebrate that beginning.

Big Basin, California's oldest State Park, will honor its centennial with one hundred days of celebration, June 8 through September 15, 2002. Events include lectures, hikes, campfire talks, history displays, art exhibits, music, dance and theater. The Celebration will culminate in a Centennial Festival at Big Basin September 13-15, 2002. A schedule of events will be available in January 2002.

California State Parks Director Rusty Areias noted, "For over 100 years, passionate individuals, government agencies and nonprofit organizations have worked in partnerships to save the redwood forests. These efforts make California's park system unparalleled in the nation. Big Basin's creation in 1902 was one of California's first accomplishments towards the permanent protection of the coast redwood forest." Today, the park contains over 18,000 acres of forestlands, including redwood, oak, chaparral, and riparian habitats.

The California coast redwoods are living remnants from the age of dinosaurs when plants and animals were huge. Millions of years ago, the ancestors of these redwoods covered the Northern

Hemisphere. The Ice Age reduced their location to a narrow belt along the west coast from southern Oregon to Monterey County, California.

By the early 20th century, the lumber industry reduced its number even more. Today, only 5 percent of California's original ancient redwood forest remain standing. The fight to preserve the redwoods led to the creation of the California State Park System, which protects thousands of acres of redwoods.

California State Parks protects the State's natural resources in partnership with environmental organizations. Organizations such as the Sempervirens Fund and Save-the-Redwoods League have raised millions of dollars to add thousands of acres of redwoods to Big Basin over the last 100 years. Mountain Parks Foundation, the facilitator of the Centennial Celebrations, is one of over 80 nonprofit organizations whose sole mission is to support environmental education in California State Parks. These organizations raised \$11.76 million dollars for this purpose in 1999. The nonprofit California State Parks Foundation, host of the September 13, 2002 Festival Opening, works to protect and enhance natural, cultural and historical treasures for all State Parks.

Big Basin Redwoods State Park was established in 1902 and is home to the largest continuous stand of Ancient Coast Redwoods south of San Francisco. Park visitors can enjoy over 80 miles of hiking trails, linking the park from the eastern edge of the Santa Cruz Mountain range to the ocean. Waterfalls, lush canyons, and a wide array of wildlife grace all areas of the park. Family and group camping, tent cabins, backpack camps, hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trails are available year round. For reservations please call 800-444-7275 or visit us online at www.parks.ca.gov. The Park will have limited camping on the Festival Weekend September 13 - 15, 2002. Additional camping sites are available at nearby Henry Cowell State Park or visit the Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council for other lodging options.

For more information online:

California State Parks <http://cal-parks.ca.gov>

California State Parks Foundation <http://www.calparks.org>

Mountain Parks Foundation <http://www.mountainparks.org>

Sempervirens Fund <http://www.sempervirens.org>

Save-the-Redwoods League <http://www.savetheredwoods.org>

Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council <http://www.santacruzca.org>

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